

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN IRISH INDEPENDENT MARCH 30, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN IRISH INDEPENDENT
MARCH 30, 1978 UNDER HEADING LAW OF THE SEA:

BELIEVE IT OR NOT - THE EXPERTS ON THE LAW OF THE
SEA ARE TRYING ONCE AGAIN TO BRING SOME RULES
INTO WHAT IS BASICALLY A NEW GAME, THE SEARCH FOR
A GUARANTEED METHOD OF SHARING OUT THE RICHES OF
THE SEA. THE EXPERTS ARE MEETING IN GENEVA,
HAVING HAD A BREAK SINCE LAST JULY WHEN DISCUSSIONS
IN NEW YORK COLLAPSED OVER THE QUESTION OF WHO
SHOULD CONTROL MINING ON THE SEABED OUTSIDE
TERRITORIAL WATERS.

THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE HAS BEEN GOING ON
FOR A LONG TIME NOW, AND WHILE THE INITIAL CHAOS
HAS BEEN SORTED OUT SOMEWHAT THE EXPERTS ARE NO
NEARER ACHIEVING A CONSENSUS ON ANY NEW LAWS THAN
THEY EVER WERE. FOR IT IS APPARENT TO ALL OF
THEM THAT POWERFUL STATES WITH SEA BOUNDARIES
WILL MAKE THEIR OWN LAW WHEN IT COMES TO
EXTRACTING RICHES FROM THE SEA, AND THE LITTLE
ONES WILL GO TO THE WALL.

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OUR OWN PROBLEMS ARE COMPLICATED: AS WELL AS
HAVING OUR SEA-LIMITS WE ALSO HAVE COMMON MARKET
LIMITS. WE DO NOT YET HAVE A CLEAR IDEA HOW FAR
OUT INTO THE SEA WE MAY GO IN PURSUIT OF MINERAL
OR OIL WEALTH WHICH WE MAY LEGITIMATELY CLAIM AS
OUR OWN. OUR INTEREST IN THE TALKS ARE THEREFORE
VITAL.

DRAFTING INTERNATIONAL LAW IS A DIFFICULT
BUSINESS: MOST MARITIME LAW IS THE RESULT OF
EVOLUTION OVER CENTURIES, WITH A GREAT SPEEDING
UP IN THE PROCESS WHEN THE STEAM BOAT ARRIVED.
BUT THE PRESENT CONFERENCE MUST TRY TO CATER NOT
ONLY FOR ORDINARY MARITIME LAW BUT ALSO FOR ALL
THE EVENTUALITIES THAT SCIENCE HAS MADE POSSIBLE
IN THE PAST 20 TO 30 YEARS. WHO, AT THE START
OF THIS CENTURY, WOULD HAVE EVER ENVISAGED GIANT
OIL WELLS IN THE NORTH SEA, FOR EXAMPLE. THE
GENEVA LAWYERS WILL BE WORKING HARD FOR A LONG
TIME TO COME. KRENE

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